

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

NOVEMBER 2020

WWW.DESMOINESCATHOLICWORKER.COM

VOLUME 44, NO. 3

SERVING CHRIST IN A YEAR OF UPHEAVAL



We are extremely grateful to Luna Warren, cooking the beans, Jenny Rodrigues Santos serving the meals, Maddy Tilley washing the dishes, and all the other young volunteers for keeping our hospitality services running during the pandemic!

by Frank Cordaro

The only thing normal about this beg letter is that it is coming to you in our November/December issue of the *via pacis*. 2020 was a year in which our world was turned upside-down on all levels, from local to global, from person to humanity.

In my June *via pacis* article, I asked, “Does anybody really know what time it is?” It feels difficult to mark the passage of time this year. March seemed to last six months. Hours spent inside stretched into days, into weeks. COVID-19 turned this year into a morbid one, so it seems more appropriate to measure time in deaths than in months. By June, coronavirus claimed 60,000 lives, more Americans than had died in Vietnam. At the writing of this article, it has claimed over 250,000 lives. The virus is nowhere near ending, with

the worst winter months yet ahead of us. It is likely the worst is yet to come. What time is it? Check the morgue.

At the end of my June *via pacis* article I wrote, “The challenge for us at the Des Moines Catholic Worker is to stay in character with the spirit of our movement, no matter what happens. To that end, we will continue serving our guests as long as there is a single healthy Catholic Worker here.” Bold words in June. The following months were “harsh and dreadful” (this is a famous phrase by Fyodor Dostoyevsky) for the Des Moines Catholic Worker, as they were for the world. Through it all, we have found surprises and miracles as well.

COVID-19 has forced a drastic rearrangement of our live-in community and reduced

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Des Moines Catholic Worker “Reparation Pledge of One Percent”

To Whom It May Concern,

Be it known that the Des Moines Catholic Worker Trust, respectfully pledges to donate one percent of the sale price of our four Des Moines properties; 713 Indiana Ave., 1301 8th St., 1317 8th St., and 1310 7th St., to the Meskwaki Tribe, within whose ancestral land this property is located. We realize that the land, including the air, water, and biological life, is a natural relative to the tribe, and no amount of money can repay them for it having been wrongfully taken from them centuries ago.

We intend to fulfill this sacred commitment, embraced in the spirit of personal responsibility and reparation, when the day comes to sell any of our properties. Until then, we will continue to care for the land and its inhabitants with ecological integrity and respect and will honor it as our natural relative, for we are stewards of all creation. Ultimately, the land belongs to Mother Earth.

Des Moines Catholic Worker Trustees: Frank Cordaro, Kay Meyer, Mike Sprong, and Hilary Burbank (May 2020)

via pacis

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THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

BECOMING A DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or send an email to dmccatholicworker@gmail.com.

MAILING ADDRESS

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Des Moines IA 50305

BISHOP DINGMAN HOUSE

(Drop-in Center and Business Phone)
1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-214-1030
Hospitality Hours:
Monday and Wednesday: CLOSED
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday: 3-6:30pm
(meals at 3pm and 6pm)
Saturday: 12-2pm (meal at 12pm)

PHIL BERRIGAN HOUSE

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314

RACHEL CORRIE HOUSE

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

CHELSEA MANNING HOUSE

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
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As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile. -Dorothy Day



Poetry Corner

“25 Lines”

Pen my misfortune from the penitentiary
Came in as a kid became a man eventually
I had to use my hands when words weren’t enough
Empathize if you had it tough

They called it the “justice system”
But it was just a prison

I no longer cry
Hardened from the abuse
Went from a nice boy
To a mad poet striving for truth

What kind of shit is this?
They incarcerate kids with predators
The Prison Industrial Complex
Can it last forever?

I think about the words of Mandela
We judge a nation by its prisons

Contradict me in the courtroom
Strip me in this course room
Dehumanize until you bleed my innocence
Understand I’ll always hate the System

Visualizing abolition

I want to write something
That will stand the test of time
Like Tupac before he was shot at a spotlight

R.I.P. Tupac Shakur #FreeHumanity

Written by Travis John Wolfkill
Contact the Author: Travis Wolfkill #6188588
Iowa State Penitentiary
P.O. Box 316
Fort Madison, IA 52627

“Time”

Here I sit surrounded by concrete and steel
Lost in my emotions, not knowing how to feel
Wishing this was all a bad dream and all I had to do is wake
Because in here, in this place, on this hour my heart slowly begins to break
How much more of my suffering must they gain
Is a broken heart not enough satisfaction for my pain?
How much more time must they take until it is too damn late?
Considering my life’s in their hands for them to procrastinate
I suppose only time will tell
I pray for the day they wish me farewell
and I’m done doing time.

“THIS LIFE I WILL ENDURE”

Young and wild raising my share of hell
Livin’ by an Outlaw code
I believed I would never be caught and all was going well
Living a fast and rebel life.
I soon would have to pay for my life of crime
Now I’m sitting here in prison all alone serving time
Sentenced to serve a soft dime.
This life I will endure
The worst I’ve been
Now it’s time to be my best
The best I can be is still ahead of me
Feelings of hate and pain I’ve away cast
This prison life I will endure
Til the day that i am set free
No more shackles, free of my outlaw chains
No longer living the outlaw life that once ran through my veins
This new life I will learn to accept
This life it will endure.

Written by Coleman K.Marlow Jr
Contact the Author: Coleman K. Marlow Jr. #6511114
Newton Correctional Facility
P.O. Box 218

“The Future is NOW”

The temperature is dropping
Can’t you see the ice ring
Forming on the rim of the sun?

Quack Quack
The duck boats won’t help you
As the sun can no longer melt the ice

It’s cold
The ancient earth shivers
Time to rest
Put away the silver n’ the fine linens too

Mr. McGoo
Will be handling the seating arrangement
The Dairy Queen will cater the attack

Snow cones n’ ice chandeliers
Not a whisper of global warming
As ice forms on the tree tops

Skate away on the frozen river of time
Swooshing resistance is futile
Cold steel becomes the only accepted currency
Icy indifference becomes the norm
Collect what you can
Privacy is something that once was

“See Thru”

The virus is in all of us
We were once virgin vessels
Now we’ve sunk to the depths of Mordor
To be consumed by rust

The end is near
Let fear become your newfound best friend
The prophecies will be fulfilled
With a shrill cattle call
As you turn to dust
That’s right, dust
From rust to dust

Dusk to dawn the raven travels
Caw is her word
As she watches the absurd life man leads
Now who is cawing
As man is on his knees praying for it to stop?

Good cop
Bad cop
Get off your spot
Who will be the first to spook n’ hop?

I’m a tasmanian devil
Creepin’ under your skin
You don’t need bifocals
To see who amongst us sins

Written by Todd A. Barry,
Cranston, Rhode Island Facility,
March 2020

“Omnicide”

Like Nelson, Cash or Presley, we are pained.
So few of us see how destructive we are.
It’s the little things that grow and fester.
It’s the unseen litter, missiles, and depleting ozone layer.

It’s the silent killers of cancer, consumerism, and self.

And as the blood dries at Kings Bay, the hammer ring echoes silent.

“And they shall beat their swords into plowshares”

But no crops were harvested.
Too little, too late for we are all gone.
An evolutionary experiment, sanitized war still unclean as commanded.

The enemy lies within our veins, slow self destructive total mercy killings.
We are the tip of the spear, nonviolent, few and universal.
Christian anarchists, “creating a new society within the shell of the old.”

Written by @kevinsullivan

Staying Sane During Quarantine: Part One

by Celestino Ramirez

My wife Charlie and I have been in quarantine since March because she is in the top tier of health risk from catching COVID-19. Except for going for the occasional drive in our vehicles so our car batteries don't die, we've been at home trying to stay busy. We have also been trying to figure out ways to continue contributing to our Des Moines Catholic Worker community, albeit in the limited capacity that we're allowed.

We started doing online begging through various groups that we are connected to with great success. We are surrounded by so many people willing to help our community out. It's a reminder and testament of how blessed we are and how many altruistic people surround us. We're so grateful to our community and the community at-large for looking out for us during these times. At one point, our community members that have still been on shift reported that our meat supplies were almost out. The Des Moines Catholic Worker has been serving at least 100 servings per meal, so we tend to go through a lot of food. Upon hearing this, we put out a community beg for meat. People came through in a huge way! Our freezers were almost filled to capacity and my family members, Heidi and Jeff Tucker, even offered to donate a whole cow!



Live action shot of Celestino and Charlie eating pizza in quarantine

Our amazing staff, Ruth, Araceli, Jenny, Luna, Maddie, and Austin have been carrying the weight of the community while the rest of us have been either practicing socially distancing or, in our case, quarantined. Not only have they been keeping our Des Moines Catholic Worker soup kitchen functioning and serving, but they, along with former community member, Madeleine Terry, have also been our lifeline by bringing Charlie and me groceries. Mr. Eddie Bloomer has brought us toiletries and essential home items. We cannot thank them enough for the outstanding job they do. As a sign of our appreciation to them, Charlie and I make dinner for them and the rest of the community every Monday

and Wednesday.

Since the pandemic, life has definitely changed, as everyone can attest to, but it really seems that it has opened people's hearts as well. A stranger on the internet had read a post we had written which said that we hadn't had a pizza since before COVID, so they ordered us not one but two pizzas, plus buffalo wings, from Domino's! It was so delicious. Along with the love and companionship from my wife, talks with our son and our community members, and Sunday community zoom meetings, we are surviving one day at a time and looking forward to this pandemic ending so we can once again go back on shifts and entertain our guests.

Changes, Lies, and Community

by Julie Brown

A lot has changed since I last wrote for the *via pacis*, and much has stayed the same. As for significant changes, I was part of the Waterloo, Iowa Catholic Worker for just over a year. They have a small intimate community that I had the privilege of being a part of. Regrettably, COVID and my full-time job made it hard for me to adjust to an unfamiliar city, and ultimately, I missed Des Moines and decided to move home. So, I am back. I am currently living at the Berrigan house, organizing and working with Christian Peacemaker Teams as their outreach coordinator.

When I came back, Frank sent around an interview of me taken several years ago, just after I joined the Catholic Worker. It was comical to look back at my thoughts on being a Catholic Worker and listening to me say what I believed the reporter wanted to hear.

The thing that stuck out the most was that I went in great length about "the joys of taking a vow of poverty." I was pretty embarrassed at how there was little truth in what I was saying. I talked about how all the clothes I had were hand-me-downs and how I ate donated food; how I

didn't have much, but my bills were paid, and "taking a vow of poverty removed walls between our guests and us."

I was surprised at how skillfully I neglected to inform the reporter that I was already living well below the poverty level when I joined the Catholic Worker. The hand-me-down sweatshirt I was wearing I had owned for many years, and donated food was a part of my prior food budget. I was overly familiar with what it was like to not have heat or electricity. I had been living as a single mom and struggled to make ends meet. I would joke with my community about how I wasn't taking a vow of poverty but getting a Catholic Worker "upgrade."

I can now see that people come to the Catholic Worker from diverse places and that that is okay. That "taking a vow of poverty" may feel like a needed step for some, but being excited to have your bills paid and good quality food is nothing to be ashamed of either. I think this would have been



Julie Brown taking a selfie at her COVID-safe birthday party at Berrigan House. (Left to Right: Ed Bloomer, Luna Warren, Maddy Tilley, Jenny Rodrigues Santos, Frank Cordaro)

more honest and also a more engaging topic.

I think, if given the opportunity to answer questions about the Catholic Worker today, I would focus on different, interesting things. For example, community, and the joy and mess of trying to live in one, or figuring out things like power and intersections of oppression, while simultaneously rooting out whose hair is in the sink. My experiences with the Catholic Worker and also my experiences living in Iraqi Kurdistan have solidified that living with others fills my soul. Community is always a huge mess, but I am happy to be back in it here in Des Moines.

A huge thank you to Reverend Chet Guinn, who recently donated his van to the Des Moines Catholic Worker! A great blessing!



Photo taken at our August 6-9 vigil. Chet is 92 years old!

Letter to the Editor + Two Responses

A Letter to the Editor
by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Patrick Stall's article, "On Violence," in the July issue of *via pacis*, argues too much attention is being given to violent actions by protesters since the murder of George Floyd by police. Since the overwhelming majority of protests have been strictly nonviolent, I too believe highlighting the exceptions is a defense mechanism against dealing with the substantive issues that need urgent attention.

Stall goes on to say that the oppression is so severe, protesters are justified in using "whatever means necessary." He says Catholic Workers should focus on denouncing the systemic injustice against blacks and others rather than criticize their tactics. He says we should not "say a single word about protesters throwing plastic water bottles at riot police encased in 60 pounds of body armor, helmets, and gas masks...."

Similar arguments can be made about Palestinians throwing stones at heavily armed Israeli soldiers and a myriad of other actions by oppressed peoples. Stall says the Catholic Worker should "call out" only the violence of the oppressors.

As someone who has seen first-hand in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, Nicaragua, Egypt, and Darfur, Sudan, the extreme violence that oppressed people often employ and who understands that study after study shows that violence is a less effective method of overcoming injustice than nonviolence, I must disagree with Mr. Stall.

Although I concur wholeheartedly we must start by denouncing injustice, I believe our unique charism goes beyond that. Catholic Workers, inspired by a God who forgave his torturers from the cross, must model another way out of hell than making it a hotter place for those with whom we disagree. Jesus not only preached a nonviolence so complete as to include enemies, he lived it. He counseled us not only to eschew killing, but to banish hatred and anger toward others from our hearts. He reminds us that armored police are part of our human family and that helping them to recall our common relationship requires tireless sacrifice, bravery, and incredible creativity.

Many groups are shouting out what is wrong with our society. What sets the Catholic Worker apart is our belief and witness that injustice can be overcome with love.

A response by Frank Cordaro:

Thank you, Scott, for your letter responding to Patrick Stall's "On Violence," in the July issue of *via pacis*. You write, "As someone who has seen first-hand in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, Nicaragua, Egypt, and Darfur, Sudan, the extreme violence that oppressed people often employ and who understands that study after study shows that violence is a less effective method of overcoming injustice than nonviolence, I must disagree with Mr. Stall."

Indeed you have served the poor and put yourself in harm's way doing gospel stuff! I know. I have been following you and your family's witness for years! Thank you! You, Claire, and the kids rock! You do us Catholic Workers proud!

You go on to write that we Catholic Workers have a unique charism that goes beyond the violence versus the nonviolence discussion. We are supposed to be "inspired" by a "Jesus (who) not only preached a nonviolence so complete as to include enemies, He lived it!"

I agree!

But I have a problem with your "Jesus is our mark" response to Black Lives Matter protests.

My problem with your bringing up Jesus is who you're not addressing. Any "Jesus" statement must first be prefaced by naming the known followers of Jesus as examples. Ours was a faith of witness before it embraced creeds and Roman bishops.

In this regard, United States Christians are the worst! As a whole and in practice, United States Christians, regardless of denomination, follow a pro-rich, pro-war, pro-United States national idolatry. It's our greatest national sin right now, sin being missing the "Jesus mark."

So to publicly lament the shortcomings of the BLM movement and then mention our Jesus' "over the top nonviolent, love-your-enemies" way of living, doesn't make sense, faith sense, because, as Gandhi once said, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

Or another way to ask the same question is to ask as I did

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Black Lives Matter, "Poking the Killer Bear," and Jesus

by Frank Cordaro

Taken from an August 17, 2020 speech given at a clergy-led BLM protest at the State Capitol: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-7Piobb8Bk>

Hello, I am Frank Cordaro. I'm a Catholic Worker. I'm wearing this old Dowling High School baseball cap because I went there 50 years ago. I'm a Des Moines person and have been a Catholic Worker for 44 years (this August 23).

This is not my first time here at the capitol. I've been "ban and barred" from here in every decade, going back to the seventies!



I am here to say, "Thank you," to the Black Lives Matter movement.

I'm thankful because you are poking the killer bear in our midst. Yes! Every community needs somebody in the village to expose the killer bears in their mist. The problem with this killer bear is that it has a "license to kill." The police are killing on behalf of a justice system that is both racist and classist, and I am thankful to Black Lives Matter Des Moines folks for poking this bear, our local police department with their license to kill.

In the United States of America, the police are not the only killer bears with a license to kill.

We also need to point out and expose the other killer bears in our midst. In America, we have a zoo filled with killer bears with a license to kill. In Des Moines, the police are the killer bears on our streets. If you go to the south side of Des Moines and the Iowa National Guard Drone Command Center, you'll find Iowans with a different license to kill, every day! They do it from computer screens, guiding armed drones over the skies in the Middle East with missiles, killing without due process, an assassination from the skies with so called "collateral damage." Just another United States killer bear with a license to kill.

God help us! We're the most dangerous, violent culture and country in the world, and we need to be stopped. Black Lives Matter is helping us do that! Thank you!

So the big question for me is this: "Is the Black Lives Matter movement more like Jesus than my bishop and my brother priest in this effort?" I got to admit, they are! And it's not just the Catholics. It's all of them. The Methodists, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Baptists and the Evangelicals; all of them are farther away from Jesus than these Black Lives Matter folks because Jesus poked the killer bear of his time too!

Check it out: In all four gospels, the man leads a street demonstration called "Palm Sunday," poking the killer bear with a licensee

to kill from the Roman Empire. He played the Messiah in a public spectacle, saying to the Romans, "Look at me, I'm Jesus Christ, ruler of the universe!" as if Jesus is the one in charge, not Caesar!

In Matthew's gospel it says, "The whole city was in an uproar," (Matt 21:10) and in Des Moines, the Black Lives Matter demonstrations have got the whole city in an uproar...and I say, thank you!

Regarding the destruction of property, that's really not an issue with Jesus and the gospels. That's right friends, right after he led the demonstration in Jerusalem, the capital

city, he did his Temple Cleansing (In the gospel of John, Jesus does the Temple Cleansing in the second chapter). By United States legal standards, it would be like hitting a cathedral and a bank at the same time, throwing out the money changers, destroying property. Major violent felonies, like today's Plowshares or pipeline actions, for sure!

One more thing; what about the "bad language," the harsh personal words used against the police? I'm no fan of it. Jesus, on the other hand, had no problem using harsh personal language against the priests and lawyers of his day, especially the ones running the temple. Read chapter 23 in Matthew. It takes place in the last week of Jesus' life, after the Palm Sunday march and the Temple Cleansing witness. Jesus is in the temple, publicly acting up, picking verbal fights with his enemies.

In Chapter 23, he didn't have one good, nice, or decent thing to say about the temple's scribes and pharisees, our modern-day priests and lawyers. So if you are like me and have a problem with Black Lives Matter's bad language, check out Matthew 23. Seems Jesus would be okay with it.

Finally, I have a message for the police. I was a Catholic priest for 19 years. I know what it's like to be part of a compromised institution. The Catholic Church in the United States has many sides, some good, and some bad. One clear bad being is that it is a sexist institution. Period! No doubt about it.

Bad enough, but the even bigger problem now is that the bishops will not let anyone talk about it, and as we all know, for any person, family, or religious institution refusing to name their sins, their silence becomes a bigger problem than the sin!

It is in the interest of the police to join BLM in publicly naming the sins of racism and classism driving their system of policing, and it needs to be dismantled. It would not hurt to get our modern day scribes and pharisees (judges and bishops) to jump on board too!

Lending My Voice in All the Chaos

by Coleman K. Marlow Jr.

Each day we see some form of racism, brutality, or injustice from police and government agencies around the world, and I ask myself, “Why is this? Is this the way it’s supposed to be?” This has been happening for as long as I can remember. This wasn’t the way it was intended when our forefathers founded this country and the Constitution. The Pledge of Allegiance claims that America means “liberty and justice for all!” Nowhere does it say liberty and justice for “some,” or “only if you’re white,” it says, “for all!” So I ask, where is this “liberty and justice for all?”

There is hate, racial discrimination, and much injustice against poor and black Americans. The word “American” should mean something. Throughout history, black Americans have contributed greatly to society. One example is the Tuskegee Airmen of the 99th Pursuit Squadron of the Air Force who served valiantly during World War Two. If black Americans have the right to fight and die like white Americans, why don’t they have the same rights as white people in our society?

Passed after the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment abolished slavery, granting citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States. The Fourteenth Amendment also established equal protection under the law, stating that the government cannot “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law...nor deny to any person...equal protection of the laws.” After 1924, the due process clause was construed by the Supreme Court to guarantee that many of the same rights guaranteed by the federal government must be recognized by states as well, meaning that regardless of a person’s skin color, their rights must be recognized across the country.

Despite this, the government has been infringing on the rights of people for decades. Take for example, the case of boxing champion Muhammad Ali: In April 1967, Ali refused induction into the United States Army, citing his religious beliefs. For this, he was stripped of his championship and sentenced to five years in prison. Ali had the right to refuse induction, based on the First Amendment, which explicitly protects “free exercise” of religion, “freedom of speech,” as well as freedom of the press and public assembly.

Many people today have mixed feelings on the issues being raised in the current protests. They should consider this: government and police agencies today are basically telling minorities that they truly don’t matter, and they try to control the way we all live our lives. They stomp on our liberties and scoff at our constitutional rights. Nelson Mandela once said, “When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.” Some people feel that organizations like Black Lives Matter - people who stand for their rights - are criminals and deserve the violence from the police. They don’t realize that when you take someone’s rights and freedoms away, they will eventually

stand and revolt against the power structures that are denying these rights. We have seen this in what people are doing today after the killing of George Floyd and the shooting of Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta. Martin Luther King Jr. underlines this point, saying in a speech, “We have no alternative but to protest...we have shown amazing patience....but we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice.” While I cannot condone vandalism and looting, I feel like Dr. King was pointing out that there are consequences for actions, in this case, the actions of the police. Police have always been held to a low standard and should at least face the standards applied to regular civilians. A violent imbalance within our justice system manifests through violent protests. As Dr. King also said, “you will reap what you sow.”

I was born in Alabama, a former confederate state. This background gives me some unique insights. Some members of my family were part of the Klan when I was growing up. When I asked them why they hated black people, they could never give me a solid answer. It basically boiled down to ignorance and the fear of the unknown; the unknown about a group of people and their traditions and lifestyles. This prejudice was stupid and irresponsible on their part. Growing up in Alabama, I noticed a lot of people considered racism to be part of their heritage, as if they had a birthright to be that way. I feel that no one has the right to judge someone else. People can only be justly dealt with in accordance with their actions and the law. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 affirmed the “equality of all men before the law.”

We were all created equal and should be able to live with the same liberties and equality within the world, to live peacefully as brothers and sisters. I’m from a former confederate state and had family members in the Klan, but that sort of prejudice doesn’t fly with me. When the government and police undermine the rights of black people, they threaten my rights as well. When denied these rights, we must become a force, defying rules and limits, and joining together for the common good of all. These quotes about liberty and justice for all are our birthright as Americans, no matter the color of our skin. Stand strong for your rights!

Mr. Marlow is currently incarcerated in the Iowa Department of Corrections. Any discussion or comments to this article or other correspondence is welcome. You can contact Mr. Marlow through www.corrlinks.com or by writing directly to

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Hiroshima-Nagasaki 75th Anniversary Remembrance Vigil

by Frank Cordaro

Starting on Thursday, August 6th at 8 a.m. (the time the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima) and ending on Sunday, August 9th at 11 a.m. (the time the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki), Eddie Bloomer and I maintained a constant 24-hour presence at the entrance of the Iowa Air National Guard Drone Command Center at 3100 McKinley Avenue, next to the Des Moines airport. No small feat for two old guys. We weathered the rain, the wind, and the beating sun. We slept in our sleeping bags between the fence line and road. The base’s security lights shone down on us at night, bright enough to read a book with, and the noise of traffic and planes was overwhelming. The smell of diesel was heavy in the air. We had to be creative to find places to relieve ourselves. During the last half of the vigil, the winds were so severe that we had to lay our banners on the ground. The vigil we kept felt like penance, but was not without its blessings and surprises.

First, our appreciations: Thank you to fellow Des Moines Catholic Worker, Ruth, who spent a night and did vigil time during the days with us. A big thanks to my brother, Joe! Joe lives 200 yards from the base’s entrance, across an empty grass field. Joe was our “go-to” guy. He got us the things we needed, brought us breakfast from McDonald’s, and took the photos! Ah, family! It’s always good to have “blood in the game.”

Hats off to Rev. Chet Guinn (92 years old!) and Eloise Cranke for showing up on Friday. They showed up at the same time as Mary Ann Koch, our beloved new Catholic Worker bookkeeper and local social activist. Also joining the Friday crowd was Kirk Johnson and his daughter, both supporters of the local Black Liberation Movement. Thank you to Jerry and Sharon Donovan for showing up for the end of our watch, and to Joe Jadryev from the Iowa City chapter of Veterans for Peace. Joe traveled the furthest for the vigil!

On Friday, we hit a zenith of seven people, the largest number of people attending the vigil at any one time. We did not reach this number again until the wrap-up session on Sunday, where we read Thomas Merton’s “Original Child Bomb” poem on the Hiroshima atomic bombing.

No one risked arrest. We weren’t looking to add to an already dangerous, overcrowded jail population during the pandemic, nor become infected ourselves.

The biggest surprise for me during the vigil was meeting Tobias. On the last night of the vigil, Saturday, after the sun had gone down, Eddie and I were in our yard chairs, recovering from the brutal head of the day. Down the road, walking towards us, came Tobias, a young man in his mid-twenties. He sat down, and we proceeded to have a long conversation in the cool breeze of early evening.

Tobias had just become a Catholic. He told us that he heard of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement and was interested in volunteering. Both Eddie



The vigil scene on August 7 (Left to Right: Jerry Donovan, Ed Bloomer, Sharon Donovan, Frank Cordaro, Ruth Hart, and Joe Jadryev, Iowa City Veterans for Peace)

and I perked up. Tobias was a former social worker. He had his BA in psychology. He wanted to advance his career in social work, but needed a masters degree. He could not pay for graduate school with his low wage job in social work, so he learned how to work with computers and now works at MediaCom. He hopes to pay for a masters degree with the extra money he now earns.

I asked Tobias how he learned to work with computers.

He then told us, with a sheepish grin on his face, that he joined the National Guard! This changed everything. We came to find out Tobias was one month away from being deployed to Kosovo for a year on a NATO mission. He was well aware of the Catholic Church’s teachings on war and peace. He could not see himself killing another person.

After spending a couple hours talking on a wide range of issues, we got to know Tobias better and vice versa. I believe Tobias is a conscientious objector in his heart already, and now he needs to act on it. I told him that when he gets to Kosovo, he should find the people doing the works of mercy. I also told him to continue his journey following his heart and to act on his convictions. I look forward to staying connected with Tobias. What a gift!

Staying Sane During Quarantine, Part Two: Des Moines Catholic Worker Technology Upgrade!

by Charlie Ramirez

As my amazing husband, Celestino, reported in “Staying Sane During Quarantine, Part One,” we’ve been in quarantine for nine months. The quarantine is my fault because I’m super awesome at growing tumors (like, really good). I’m pleased to report that we continue to wake up every morning even more in love with each other than we were when we went to sleep the night before.

Loving each other while feeling the isolation hardcore, Celestino and I have worked hard to find ways to continue to be involved in and an asset to the community, using what strengths we have while we’re confined to the house. Once upon a time, I was a chemist, but once upon a time after that, I was a software developer. Even though also once upon a time after that, I got a Fancy Math Algorithm Of Cleverness patented by the official United States government or whatever, I did not super enjoy writing software, because, ugh, I am impatient. The five years I spent doing so served only to enhance one of my curses/virtues: Functional Laziness (innovation?)! As such, I now have a great love for process efficiency improvement in all of its delightfully slothly forms. Yay, charts!

What all of this, plus our sentence of six weeks to life in COVID jail, has added up to is that I have designed, built, and published a brand new, shiny, Des Moines Catholic Worker website! Allow me to share with you all of its beautifully indolent features:

1) Fresh from the presses, automatically, digitally updated issues of the *via pacis*! Also included, and as easily accessible as this issue, are archives of every single *via pacis* newspaper since the first one was published by the Des Moines Catholic Worker in 1976!

2) Conveniently located links to Frank’s blog and the Des Moines Catholic Worker’s Facebook and Instagram pages to give you up to the minute reports about what life is like in the community, in the Dingman House kitchen, and under the banners on the capitol steps!

3) Super new technological ways to keep in touch, donate, and get involved (please refer to the included, very impressive, screenshot-photo-picture to the left: amazing!)

4) The fanciest of pants new donation options! Want to make recurring monetary donations, but don’t

want to have to put a reminder in your phone calendar with a really annoying notification sound? We’ve got you! Interested in joining the Des Moines Catholic Worker family as a regular monthly meal provider? Your dream is only one click away! Have extra coats/boots/sleeping bags/cans of tuna fish or additional commodity et ceteras? We’ll be grateful for literally anything! Just click “How To Help” from the main menu on the website, and tell us!

In conclusion, quarantine has been hard, primarily because we miss being members of the community that we have loved so much and (if you’ve been a reader for a minute, you already know) rescued me from despair five years ago. Celestino, our son, little Tony T, and I serve because it’s what the Lord has called us to do. We hope that what we contribute to the community and its good work will continue to serve its members and guests for years and years to come.

Love to all,
Charlie

SHAMELESS NEW WEBSITE PROMOTION,
READY, SET, GO!

Please visit the new website; it is so cool:

www.desmoinescatholicworker.com

SHAMEFUL POSTULATION!

The website is new, so if there is anything awesome you’d like to see more of, anything blech you’d like to see less of, or any other constructive criticism you’d like to offer, please feel free to email the Des Moines Catholic Worker webmaster at the following address: webmaster@desmoinescatholicworker.com

Also, the webmaster is just me, Charlie, so please deliver critiques gently if you can. Rest assured, I read every email, give every request serious consideration, and will accommodate pretty much any reasonable website feature request, provided you tell me that my husband and I are the cutest couple ever. If you can’t in good faith do that because you and your spouse have been together for 30 plus years, and in fact you two are the cutest, please substitute advice to sustain marital bliss through the decades or, alternatively, adorable love stories.

Des Moines Catholic Worker
Making our house, our community and our world a place where it's easier to be good.

How To Help



There are many ways that you can help the Des Moines Catholic Worker! Connect with us using the form below and tell us what you have in mind!

I'd like to:

- ☐ Prepare and serve a meal
- ☐ Donate items or food
- ☐ Sponsor us by paying a monthly bill (electricity, water, trash, etc.)
- ☐ Donate professional services or skills
- ☐ Volunteer at the house
- ☐ Get involved with social justice initiatives
- ☐ Learn about becoming a Catholic Worker
- ☐ Something else I'll describe below!

Comment or Message *



Help Us!



Connect With Us!



A sneak peak at our new website!

COVID-19 Strategy At the Catholic Worker

by Jennifer Rodrigues Santos

I’m Jennifer Rodrigues Santos. I’m a Grinnell College student, and I’ve been with the Des Moines Catholic Worker for six months. I did not get to see how things were done here before we established COVID-19 precautions, but I know that a lot has changed in these past six months.

First, the roster is entirely different now than it was when I first moved here. About half of the people now in the community were not here when I first arrived. Things on shifts have changed too. For example, we have stopped providing showers and opening the physical house space to guests. This has been a very dynamic environment, with a lot changing from week to week as COVID ravages the country.

We’re still serving guests hot meals, supplies, and clothes, we just do it through a window instead of inside the house. Guests stand in line outside, next to cones set six feet apart. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we do grocery box giveaways thanks to donations from Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s. We have someone on shift give them out to guests at our front door, staying mindful of social distancing precautions. Our meals are either prepared by meal providers outside of the community or by Catholic Workers. I normally prepare two or three meals a week in addition to working three to five shifts.



Our guests have accommodated to our social distancing guidelines, but we miss socializing with them inside the house! (Photo from second floor window at Dingman House by Frank Cordaro)

We have been getting busier since COVID hit, with more people coming and taking more meals on average. We go through about 50 pounds of meat, give or take, for our 3 p.m. meals. We give out meals through the window, along with desserts, snacks, and drinks. We give out at least 200 to-go containers daily with our 3 p.m. meal and our 6 p.m. meal.

We store supplies in our storeroom and hand them out to guests through the window. Many guests request general hygiene kits or food from our pantry. We hand out clothes as well, and we have a closet outside of the house for guests to pick through. Since we can’t allow guests in the house due to COVID, this closet allows guests to find clothes that fit while preventing close indoor contact.

Despite COVID, we are still doing everything we can to help those in need, and numbers show that we’re helping more people than ever before. We hope to continue doing this work, staying COVID-conscious until it is one hundred percent safe to go back to doing things the normal way. I was never here to

see the simpler times, with guests gathering around the dinner table instead of just taking their meals and leaving, but I hope to see it soon.

Until then, we will continue taking precautions to keep ourselves and our guests safe, and we’ll always need money, food, supplies, and people for us to do the work. Please contribute to the efforts in any way that you can!

SERVING CHRIST IN A YEAR OF UPHEAVAL, continued from page 1

the number of people originally living in our four houses. Eight of them have left the community since the beginning of the year. Of the remaining eight, the most vulnerable, Charlie Ramirez, has one lung. So Charlie and her husband, Celestino, are in full quarantine at Manning House. Young Anthony, Celestino's son, can no longer visit or stay at Manning House, a real bummer! Annie Patton, unable to remain quarantined, moved out of Manning House to live with relatives.

Ed Bloomer, Norman Searah, and I are all over 65. Each of us live in a different Catholic Worker house, doing our best to socially distance, while remaining active within our community. We can no longer serve any meals at Dingman House. Norman, unable to do a full quarantine, moved into the basement suite at Manning House. Eddie, also unable to do a full quarantine at Manning House, moved to Berrigan House, while I moved back to my second floor bedroom at Dignman House.

Of those who were here in January, only Ruth Hart and Araceli Benitez-Moya are still able to do the work. Right now, Araceli is in Chiapas, Mexico, where she is visiting her mother, who is recovering from the virus. She will return in December. Ruth is temporarily away from the house for health reasons. We pray for her speedy return. There is no one left from the original 16 people able to do the work of hospitality right now!

Miraculously, others have shown up to fill the gap.

Three college students are with us now. Jenny Rodrigues Santos, a Grinnell College student, joined us in April, and Luna Warren and Maddy Tilley joined us from Maryland in July. They are all taking their college courses online while living and helping with hospitality. Luna and Maddy plan to be with us until mid-December, and Jenny has decided to join our community! They are a great help, and we're lucky to have them.

All three of these young people were recruited to come to the Des Moines Catholic Worker by Lily Kirsch, a Grinnell student from Maryland. Lily spent two months with us before visiting home for a couple of weeks. Unfortunately, she was not able to return to us on account of health issues. However, she left an indelible mark on our community during her short time here, and she is missed dearly.

Austin Cook, a recent Moody Bible College graduate, has joined the community as well. He is a natural on the food line, a great worker, and a fellow Jesus nut. He loves the Bible and prayer, plus he is related to Sisters Jeanie and Elaine Hagedorn. We are blessed!

More surprises: The Des Moines Catholic Worker has joined the ranks of supporters and allies of our local Black Liberation Movement in a big way!

We are very proud to host several Black Liberation Movement (BLM) organizers in our community. The work of these talented young people, along with that of the larger Des Moines BLM collective here, has galvanized protests for racial justice and turned spontaneous protest into a determined movement for racial equality. We are happy to have them and support their work in whatever way we can.

Additionally, former Des Moines Catholic Workers, Patrick Stall, Jade Suganuma, and Madeleine Terry, began plugging in with the local BLM movement when it began in the city. With a group they originally formed to serve our houseless guests at their camps, they

successfully scrambled to establish a bail fund and jail support system for arrested protesters. Their work has expanded into helping BLM administer a rent relief fund, along with other support activities. While none of them live in the community anymore, their early work, along with the current presence of BLM organizers, means that there has been a constant buzz of protest support activity in the community since late May.

Lastly, Norman, Eddie and I have joined a BLM clergy-led vigil five days a week at the main Des Moines police station.

The other big news at Berrigan House is that our beloved former Catholic Worker, Julie Brown, has returned! She moved into Berrigan House, where she will continue her job with Christian Peacemaker Teams. Welcome back, Julie!



Ed, Frank, and Norman with visiting former Des Moines Catholic Worker, Sheri Clemens, at the clergy-led BLM vigil at the main Des Moines police station. Join us Monday through Friday, noon to 1 p.m.!

With the virus, our hospitality has radically changed. We serve everything; food, clothing, toiletries, blankets, and coats, out of a first floor window in Dingman House. People doing the hospitality, serving our guests, preparing the meals, and working in the kitchen must wear masks and rubber gloves and constantly sanitize their own hands and surfaces. We still do the 3 p.m. meal and the 6 p.m. meal on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, and a noon meal on Saturdays. We are handing out as many as 150 to-go meals every day we are open, a marked increase from before the pandemic.

We also now do a "box food" giveaway on Tuesdays and Fridays, which we give out the front door, and we continue to provide support and staff for the Free Food Store at Trinity las Americas, just down the street from us, every Saturday.

We beg all the food we serve, all the stuff we give away to our guests, and almost everything we need to live on in these four houses!

We also depend on hundreds of people throughout the year to help in our work, including monthly meal providers, volunteers at Dingman House on shifts, special seasonal meals, and cleaning and maintenance projects. All of this combined amounts to thousands of volunteer hours yearly.

Special volunteer "thank you" call-outs go out to the following:

Mary Ann Koch, who's managing our Credit Union Bank Account! Also to Fr. David Polich, who holds the Des Moines Catholic Worker bank account in his name. Thanks, Fr. Dave, for trusting us to spend your donations well. No small thing!

Hats off to long time shift volunteers, Robert Mulqueen and Charles Mertes, who have come back to help on shifts, masked and ready to serve our guests!

Thank you also to Dr. Joe Barsett and Ray Blasé, two fellow South Side/St. Anthony's/Dowling "wise guys." Dr. Joe is on my short list of go-to people for stuff we need during this pandemic. When we are short on anything that you can buy at Sam's Club, Dr. Joe makes it happen (and in the quantities we need)!

Over the last couple years, our meat supply from Trader Joe's and Whole Foods slowly dried up, mostly because of Trump's trade war with China. Ray Blasé, our own "St. Vincent DePaul" of Ankeny, stepped up and helped keep our freezers full. Ray connected us with WG Provisions High Quality Meat in Ames. We received meat from them eight to ten times over the last two years, several hundred pounds of frozen cooked beef and pork each time! Ray and I have also started begging money from our Dowling High 1969 classmates for a Des Moines Catholic Worker meat fund.

Still, we need money to pay our bills. The virus did not eliminate our bills, it actually increased them in some areas. Our overall yearly operational budget is \$75,000. That really is not much when you measure how much is done with that sum. It pays the property taxes, the monthly gas, electric, water, internet, and phone bills for three houses, sustaining our 15 live-in staff and guests. As always, no staff person here takes a salary. Everyone living in our four houses is provided with room and board, but no money, in keeping with the spirit of our movement. We have a cargo van we use and need to maintain. The upkeep and maintenance of three old houses is a regular expense, and we could use extra money for larger rehab projects. Most importantly, we rely on this infrastructure, these vehicles, and our staff to support our hospitality work. We now provide more than 1000 hot meals every week to our guests and give out countless bags of produce, groceries, hygiene items, and other necessities. Your support has made this work sustainable for more than 40 years, and we rely on your continued support to keep going.

With this in mind, I ask that you consider taking a few of the following actions in the coming weeks during this charitable season:

-Keep donating money to the Des Moines Catholic Worker. If you can give more, I encourage you to do so...

-Pass this *via pacis* newsletter onto someone else to read and possibly join our readership and support system.

-Invite a Des Moines Catholic Worker to your church, school, or social justice organization to give a presentation on the Catholic Worker movement and our community here in Des Moines.

In the end, it's really all about staying the course and keeping true to who we are as Catholic Workers. I can't say it any better than I did in my article in the summer edition of this paper: "To love each other is to live to serve. This is what we do at the Catholic Worker. It's always been a race to the bottom with serving as our game! We continue to serve, in good times and in bad times."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR + TWO RESPONSES, continued from page 4

at a clergy-led BLM protest at the Iowa State Capitol this August: “The big question for me is, ‘Is the Black Lives Matter movement more like Jesus than my bishop and my brother priest in this effort?’” You can refer to my published speech on page four of this issue, but in short, the answer is a resounding, “Yes!”

A response by the author, Patrick Stall:

We thank Scott Schaeffer-Duffy for his reply to my June 2020 article “On Violence” and have printed it above. In his response, Schaeffer-Duffy grants that calling out the violence of the state is an essential task for Catholic Workers, but he expresses his belief that protest using only nonviolence and love for the oppressor is appropriate for our movement. His argument has three basic points: nonviolent resistance is more effective; nonviolent resistance is what is preached by Jesus; nonviolent resistance is the particular calling of the Catholic Worker movement.

Though he was the only person to write a response to my article, I sincerely doubt he is the only Catholic Worker to hold this view. There is a significant portion of the movement, particularly in the generation that came of age in the 1960s and 70s, that holds similar beliefs, and I will take Schaeffer-Duffy’s response as a reasonable representation of this school of thought. I thank him for the opportunity to address these ideas and will below argue that not only are his points incorrect, but that it is the duty of the Catholic Worker as an institution to materially support the Black Liberation Movement. Anything other than full-throated support of the current rebellion, including its most radical elements, dooms the Catholic Worker to die with the 1960s generation, to become irrelevant and outmoded in the social movements of the twenty-first century.

“Nonviolent protest is more effective.” I hear this claim so often now that I feel compelled to devote some space to debunk it. The claim that nonviolent protest is always most effective is a relatively new one for advocates of strictly peaceful protest, replacing the more moralistic arguments of Theoreau, Gandhi, and King. The young school of social movement theory, a subset of the field of sociology, has produced a few dozen studies lending support to this claim, many of them funded by the United States State Department and Central Intelligence Agency. The foundational study in this field is “Why Civil Resistance Works,” a CIA-funded paper written by Erica Chenowith, an academic, and Maria Stephan, a former State Department official. These authors claim that “campaigns of nonviolent resistance against authoritarian regimes were twice as likely to succeed as violent movements,” and they cite a few hundred movements across the world in the twentieth century in their study as evidence.

“Why Civil Resistance Works” suffers from the predictable pitfalls of quantitative analysis in the social sciences: selection and sample biases are extremely difficult to avoid in this field, and this study is no exception. Which movements are “nonviolent,” which are “violent,” which are “successful,” why certain movements were studied and not others, is never sufficiently explained. Among the protest campaigns counted as “successful,” Chenowith and Stephan include a number of CIA-backed coups and Color Revolutions as examples. In these “revolutions,” popular discontent in a country was harnessed to destabilize a regime, which was ultimately replaced with another authoritarian regime, more Western-friendly and neoliberal than before. In some of these countries (Serbia and Ukraine), the United States State Department was at hand to facilitate political transition, and the International Monetary Fund swept in to privatize national resources and end universal social programs.

When “successful,” the sort of “civil resistance” advocated by these scholars in practice generally destabilizes regimes or strongmen enough to force them to step down, but leaves intact state bureaucracies and repressive institutions. This destabilization allows the local ruling class, sometimes with the assistance of Western intelligence agencies, to install a new regime, which needs only to put its hands on the ready-made state machinery to reestablish coercive hierarchies. For the radicals of today who aim for the abolition of capitalism, of prisons, of race itself, what “civil resistance” is capable of achieving is simply not enough. We must go further, we must fight harder, and we must embrace a diversity of tactics to not only destabilize the American order, but to tear it up by the roots.

The sort of nonviolent civil resistance scholarship produced by Chenowith, Stephan, and Gene Sharp and promulgated by United States-funded NGOs like USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy, the State Department, and the CIA, are intellectual tools of the ruling class intended to extend and justify the United States’ “soft power” abroad in an era where direct military intervention is politically untenable. Even taken on their own merits, we find these studies to be deeply wanting. They fail to take into account the effect of radical, “violent” wings of largely nonviolent campaigns on the movement as a whole (for instance, the United States government negotiated with Martin Luther King Jr. because they feared Malcolm X). Moverover, studies like Chenowith and Stephan’s fail to draw a meaningful distinction between what they call “violent” and “non-violent” resistance, and they fail to demonstrate that the “successes” that well-defined civil resistance movements achieved are actually desirable. The “study after study” referenced by Schaeffer-Duffy are not objective, honest accounts of reality. They are shoddy works of American propaganda. If we allow it to cloud our thinking domestically, we have done the United States government a favor.

Another problem, both with the above studies and the general line of argument from lecturers of strict adherence to nonviolence, is that the distinction between “violent” and “nonviolent” resistance itself is largely meaningless. What is called “violent” is highly subjective and is often a line drawn by the state itself in order to justify crackdowns on protests. Is blocking a highway violent? Breaking windows? What about looting or

resource liberation? Kicking a can of tear gas back at the cops? Yelling at the police? How about telling black people how to protest while sitting at home?

One thing Chenowith and Stephan do get right is that movements need popular support to succeed, and people protesting George Floyd’s death absolutely had that, forcing public attention on the issue by burning down a police precinct. The vast majority of Americans of all ideological categories (other than Republicans) support both this creative destruction and the current movement as a whole. In some twenty weeks, BLM has taken police and prison abolition from the margins of political thought to the forefront, cut tens of millions from police budgets, and brought together a previously divided Left (and at least 25 million Americans) through a variety of tactics, from silent vigils to raucous uprisings. This is more than can be said for 19 years of antiwar sign-holding, which mobilized fewer people to do less, with nothing to show for it. Successful movements mobilize vast numbers of people using a diversity of tactics, which is exactly what the current wave of protests has done.

“Nonviolent resistance is what is preached by Jesus.” I let Frank address this more comprehensively in his reply (see page 4), but I think the biblical record is not as clear on this point as Schaeffer-Duffy believes. While Christ did say “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9), he also said “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34), to bring not social harmony but a rupture in familial and social relations. Most notably, Jesus cleared the temple: “He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables,” (John 2:15), an act that would certainly be condemned by some as violent today. Jesus both allowed himself to be crucified and beat merchants with a whip. Perhaps the biblical record itself suggests that Jesus embraced a diversity of tactics.

“Nonviolent resistance is the particular calling of the Catholic Worker movement.” Perhaps so. Or at least, perhaps that is true of the portion of the movement to which this reply is addressed. But again, no one is really asking Catholic Workers to throw back the tear gas. If we’re honest with ourselves, we aren’t a large enough group to make much of a difference one way or the other by our individual actions at protests. What we don’t have in numbers, though, we certainly have in institutional capacity; in money, food and materials, institutional access, and houses. We have a duty, if we’re a part of the Left, a part of the broad movement toward liberation of all people, to mobilize

those resources in support of BLM. Harbor the “rioter.” Bail out the “looter.” Force our connections in the institutional church to pick a side. Feed the rebellion.

In 1936, Dorothy Day wrote an open letter to Spanish Republicans (basically, a liberal, anarchist, and communist coalition) resisting a fascist coup in Spain. She likened those who would defend themselves with arms to the unfaithful who urged Christ to come down for the cross, admonished them to lay down their arms, to “fling themselves...into the teeth of the enemy,” to “complete the suffering of Christ.” As a result of their military defeat, the Spanish Republicans were forced to comply with her words the next year. After they laid down their arms, tens of thousands of Republican men, women, and children were subsequently lined up against walls and in shallow ditches and brutally murdered by fascist soldiers. Day’s letter, which was rightly interpreted as demanding that leftists lay down and accept death while fascism engulfed their country, sparked the beginning of an exodus of radicals from the Catholic Worker Movement, which almost collapsed entirely by the end of World War Two.

The Catholic Worker is in a similar position today as it was at the time of Day’s letter, that is, ascendent on a small scale. If we decide to spend our time asking our black comrades to fight back only in ways that are aesthetically pleasing to a generation whose time has come and gone, to “complete the suffering of Christ,” we may find ourselves again on the wrong side of history and at the precipice of collapse. I have yet to hear a single person under 30 (except our reactionary opponents, of course), talk about loving the police and the need to keep our protests “peaceful.” On the whole, my generation instinctively understands the urgency of these protests and the utility of their tactics. If the Catholic Worker generation of the 1960s cannot stand with BLM and its tactics, it should stand aside and hand the reins to the next generation that stands with them already.

...



Photo: former Des Moines Catholic Worker and Grinnell College graduate, Carmen Trotta’s first arrest at the Iowa State Capitol on August 5, 1986, protesting the Iowa National Guard being sent to Honduras.

Carmen has been a member of the New York City Catholic Worker for over thirty years and is a member of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7. He was sentenced to 14 months in federal prison.



Catholic Workers supporting Des Moines Black Liberation Movement. Come join us Monday through Friday, noon to 1 p.m. for a clergy-led BLM vigil at the main Des Moines police station on E. 1st and Court Ave.

What Brought Me Here

by Austin Cook

I'm Austin Cook. I moved into the Catholic Worker about a month and a half ago because I wanted to serve the poor and contribute to the unity of the Church. Since this is my first article in the *via pacis*, I will introduce myself and explain what led me here.

Born and raised in Urbandale, I grew up playing recreational sports, exploring neighborhood parks, and riding bikes. I grew up going to church, but this practice was more cultural than religious, and Christianity was not a major part of my childhood. Despite minor ups and downs, few things disrupted what was a happy childhood.

The long loneliness set into my bones for the first time during seventh grade. I had few friends in my classes, I saw my brother less because he started high school, and after school, I sat for hours alone before my parents returned from work. Depression set in. I told my mom I was sad, and she was there for me. She pushed me through that season. Afterward, I tried to alleviate the sadness by spending every possible hour with friends and family. My friends and family helped, yet some of my friendships grew bitter because of immaturity and lovelessness. I had not cured my problem, but merely transformed it.

During my freshman year of high school, a friend invited me to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) meeting. I showed up, and one person there shared a compelling experience with Jesus in his prayer life. After several months of showing up to FCA, I began to believe that Jesus could be real. If he was, his story was a beautiful story, more beautiful than I would ever imagine. I wanted to believe in him: that was the start of my journey with Jesus.

My sophomore year, I joined the FCA leadership team. I also joined a new religious discussion group at my school called Catalyst, which met weekly. I enjoyed these meetings and felt they benefitted me spiritually, so I attended the meetings regularly. The following year, they also asked me to join the leadership team, and I obliged. After my first year on the team, the founder had graduated, so a buddy of mine and I were left to deliver most of the lectures. I floundered through leading twelve or fifteen meetings that year, but I finished it believing that I wanted to preach God's love and purpose in the face of despair. Yet I knew if I were to do it, I would need to study the scriptures.

To this end, I decided to enroll at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago once I graduated from high school. Though I generally like to hang out with people, I sometimes was a studying hermit in college. The opportunity to study was very beneficial to me, but it consumed me. I would have liked to spend more time socializing and serving people experiencing homelessness. I felt a great tension because I was deeply studying the word of God, but because I was so tired with school, I could not put these words into action to the extent that I desired.

After graduating from Moody, I was drawn to the Catholic Worker for several reasons. I wanted to serve people experiencing homelessness and

hunger, and I wanted to be a part of fighting for racial justice with black and brown people. While I was studying, I became conscious of the racial segregation still present in Chicago: black folks lived on the south and west sides, and white people lived on the north side and in the suburbs. This was due to historic practices of redlining and other forms of discrimination. I wanted to be a part of fixing segregation, not by building a nice home in an impoverished neighborhood, but by moving into a typical home in an impoverished neighborhood and loving my neighbors there. The Catholic Worker was a perfect fit for that.

I have been reading Jesus's final prayer before going to the cross in John 17, where Jesus prays for Christian unity: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word (anyone who is a Christian after the first twelve disciples), so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me... I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me." I believe part of the reason nonchristians don't believe in the love of God is because Christians are divided. I want to do what I can to contribute to unity, so folks can experience the love God freely offers. I hope that at the Catholic Worker, I can learn more about Roman Catholicism, build bridges for the unity of the church, and by doing so, help people to believe in Christ and experience the love of God.

I am blessed to be here at the Worker, and I hope and pray that God continues to bless everyone involved in it.



Austin is living the dream at the Des Moines Catholic Worker!

The Divide

by Richard Flamer

I'm old and tired. For years, I worked construction, not really even noticing an eight or twelve hour work day. In the past, I have worked in Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico in various occupations. I continue to keep in touch with my carpenter friends in towns and villages where I have helped set up carpentry shops for young folks. Some of the shops have failed over the years, but others are still active, so I continue to bring down tools on my annual trips to the United States. I still work with two groups doing reforestation and the school and cooperative in Yalambajoch, Guatemala, made up of repatriated Chuj Indians. In years past, I tried to be a good Catholic Worker, with mixed results. Some days I served, other days I did not. I used to try and decipher what it meant to be both a Catholic and a worker. These days I think about it all much less.

Araceli, my wife of 18 years, is still active, trying to live out her dreams while serving the poor. Coming from a very poor family in southern Oaxaca, she has been working since age seven. Currently, she lives and works at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, where she has been cooking (for 150 people) twice a week, cleaning common areas, mopping floors, doing dishes, sorting donations, and taking care of a deaf cat.

The thirty-year age gap between us has made a difference in our lives. I read a lot these days. On my more active days at our farm, I plant and take care of fruit trees and flowers. I get the opportunity to watch not only the flowers bloom, but also Araceli.

Along with her chores at the Worker, Araceli is getting an education that she always



Araceli and Richard in Chiapas, Mexico

wanted, but lacked the opportunity to pursue. She studies English for two hours every weekday morning and attends two evening classes weekly, working on her GED. Though she has now received her residency papers and work permit for the United States, she has little time to work for money. She manages to work several hours a week regardless, cleaning houses and watching dogs.

With what spare time she has, Araceli spends it out walking, exploring on the bus system in Des Moines, and window shopping at the malls. Through her church (bilingual Methodist), she has

made good friends with other emigres.

While she is in Des Moines and I am in Chiapas, we talk daily. I miss her physical presence, and she misses mine. Oddly enough, we are both becoming more religious. She is making friends among the guests, especially those with limited English, along with her local hispanic women friends. I continue to commune with people in our little rural community.

... I have seen many changes in the last 18 years at Des Moines Catholic Worker. These days, many of the older workers have left, some have disappeared, while others remain with a limited work time. The pandemic has wreaked havoc with work schedules, but the chaos of old is still present. The old adage of Catholic Workers neither working nor being Catholic still prevails. More and more, Des Moines is relying on volunteers from outside, such as college students not able to return to classrooms.

The chaos of Des Moines is not limited to Iowa. In my travels, I have visited and sometimes worked, at Catholic Workers in Austin, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Columbia, Omaha, Milwaukee, Houston, Maloy, Los Angeles, and Yankton. The same kind of joyful and sorrowful chaotic life reigns in all of them. Some of them have closed, some of them have changed, while some are adapting to life in the pandemic.

I'm ashamed to admit I have been a lousy Catholic Worker, but I am proud to say my wife is an exemplary Worker, bringing the Beatitudes of Matthew to life in Des Moines.

RIP Joe Fagan, Fr. Jack McCaslin, and Sr. Ardeth Platte O.P. *PRESENTI!*

by Frank Cordaro

The Des Moines Catholic Worker lost three peace and justice mentors and friends recently: Joe Fagan (80), Fr. Jack McCaslin (91), and Sr. Ardeth Platte O.P. (84).

I first met Joe Fagan in the summer of 1976, the year we started the Des Moines Catholic Worker. Joe had just recently left the priesthood. He and three other Iowa Catholic priests started Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) in Waterloo. I had just left the seminary to start the Des Moines Catholic Worker. I needed a job and got hired on to be the first CCI organizer in Des Moines.

Joe Fagan trained me to be a neighborhood organizer. During my first years at the Worker, I organized our neighborhood for CCI. We battled with the city council, Polk County Board of Supervisors, and corporate heads like John Ruan. We fought over animal control issues, stop signs, and keeping the urban community college (now DMACC) campus in our neighborhood.

It was a lot of fun. I like working with people. Staging public theater so the voices of poor and working class people can be heard came naturally to me. I learned how to open an office, work a mimeograph machine, and maintain press contacts, plus a whole lot more.

What hope I have as a Catholic anarchist in American “democracy,” I have because of Joe Fagan and my time working for CCI. Organized citizens reclaiming control of their own lives from the state and corporate elites is the only democracy that makes sense for me. CCI does this, and for its first 40 years, Joe Fagan was its heart and soul, a role he filled while also being an incredible husband and father.

It was Joe Fagan, the person, that impressed me the most. He kept being a mentor for me, long after I left CCI. Joe had a spirit and fire in his belly for the “fight” like I have rarely seen, and he had a deep and abiding love for the people he organized.

JOE FAGAN PRESENTI!



RIP Joe Fagan, inspirational local activist (Photo Credit: *The Des Moines Register*)



RIP Fr. McCaslin (Left to Right: Fr. McCaslin, Peg Gallagher, Mark Kenney, crossing the line at STRATCOM, August 9, 2010)

If Joe Fagan showed me there is life after the priesthood, and Fr. Jack McCaslin showed me how a good priest survives in a compromised Church, Sr. Ardeth Platte O.P. is the best argument for ordaining women bishops!

We met at the February 1985 Faith and Resistance Retreat that Bishop Dingman hosted in Glenwood, Iowa. Over 600 people showed up for this weekend retreat in the midst of a snow storm. Speakers included Fr. Dan Berrigan and Jim Wallis. At the end of the retreat 240 people “crossed the line” at Offutt Air Force Base, the home of the Strategic Air Command, across the Missouri River from Glenwood. It was quite an event to meet this incredible woman!

Sr. Ardeth had already established her mark as a radical social justice nun in Saginaw, Wisconsin. She went from being a principal at a Catholic school to a member of the city council, and then became the mayor! Always advocating for the poor and needy in her city, she began to see the need to start addressing the larger national issues that keep the poor, poor. For example, nuclear weapons.

After the Faith and Resistance Retreat, Sr. Ardeth and others in Michigan started their own resistance to two SAC Air Force bases in their state. They hosted their own Faith and Resistance Retreats, and after the SAC bases were closed in Michigan in 1995, Ardeth and her fellow O.P., Sr. Carol Gilbert, moved into the Jonah House resistance community in Baltimore, Maryland with Phil Berrigan and Liz McAlister.

In 1998 I was not on good terms with Bishop Charron. The model of resistance parish priest I was attempting to practice was not accepted. I was desperate and ready to do a plowshares action.

Thank God for Sisters Ardeth and Carol and Washington D.C. Catholic Worker, Kathy Boylan. They were plotting a plowshares witness in the D.C. area and were looking for others to join. Fr. Larry Morlan and I were the only ones who took them up on their offer. It worked for all of us. Ardeth, Carol, and Kathy (the locals) did all the planning and work. Larry and I (the out-of-towners) came in and followed directions.

The outcome for our efforts was the May 18 “Gods of Metal Plowshares” that took place at the annual USAF Air Show at Andrews Air Force Base, just outside Washington D.C. The five of us put a B52 bomber on display to the hammer and poured our blood on this instrument of death. Clearly, thousands of dollars damage done. We were looking at multiple felonies that carried twenty to thirty year sentences!

At this point in Ardeth and Carol’s criminal peacemaking careers, they were known as the teflon nuns. They never got hammered with jail time. This time was

I first met Fr. Jack McCaslin in 1978 after we started protesting at Offutt Air Force Base. He was our go-to priest for anything we did at Offutt Air Force Base and in Omaha, Nebraska. Fr. Jack was a well-known “radical” priest from the 1960s in Omaha. He was first arrested with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama.

In a March 2011 NCR story, Jack said “In Selma, I learned that there are laws that hinder, that government can be evil in how it’s fashioned ... and that somebody’s got to do something. You can just say this is bad news, but we have to do something about it. What we can do is break the darn law that says you can’t do this, or you can’t do that... Justice says that the guy on the street has the right to food enough, drink enough, clothing enough, shoes enough, and warmth enough not to die of starvation or exposure. To me, that seems to be the minimum society owes each other. We have to figure out ways to make that happen ... We don’t make that happen by spending all our money making guns and airplanes and bombs to go kill people” (from “Behind peace witness, a prophetic, transforming priest,” NCR, Mar 25, 2011).

Fr. Jack was arrested at Offutt Air Force Base, home to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in a protest against the Vietnam War in the early 1970s, long before he joined the Catholic Worker movement in 1978. He became a pillar of the peace community in eastern Nebraska. There was no better friend and faithful supporter for peace and justice folks in the Omaha area than Fr. Jack; no matter their faith, race, nationality, or gender.

No doubt about it, when I was a functioning priest on the western side of Iowa, near Omaha, getting arrested with Fr. Jack McCaslin at my side, I gained a measure of respect that would not have been there without him. When I celebrated mass for a 1997 Call To Action conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska and was threatened with excommunication by the local bishop, Fr. Jack followed suit, celebrated mass for the Lincoln Call To Action community, and got the same threat from the same bishop.

What I appreciated the most about Fr. Jack was how well he lived his priesthood. He took seriously his priestly duties; to administer the sacraments, visit the sick, celebrate Eucharist, and preach the gospels. He pastored his parishes in the spirit of the II Vatican Council, where the people decided and led with their priest how best to fulfill its mission. He often served the poorest parishes in the diocese and loved it. He did all these things well, and the people he served loved him for it.

FR. JACK MCCASLIN PRESENTI!

no different! By the time we got to trial, the charges were dropped to one misdemeanor destruction of property charge, under one thousand dollars of damage! We were found guilty, and I was given six months, a gift from heaven.

Ardeth and Carol went on to do several more plowshares witnessing on top of Inter-Continental Nuclear Missile in Colorado. They lost their “teflon” status and ended up doing many months in prison and became famous:

“A character on ‘Orange Is the New Black,’ Sister Jane Ingalls, was based on Sister Platte, who practiced yoga at the Danbury prison with Piper Kerman, author of the book on which the series about a group of women serving time in a minimum-security prison is based” (Patrick O’Neil, Washington Post, Sept 30, 2020).

Ardeth and Carol also reached a wide range of people with their anti-nuclear weapons message. Just google Ardeth to get a sense of her life’s witness.

The final time I saw Ardeth and Carol was in March 2019, here in Des Moines. We were hosting the Midwest Catholic Worker Faith and Resistance Retreat and Witness. They were keynote speakers. It was a grand weekend, largely thanks to their speeches. Even in the year just before her death, she never ceased her witness against war and imperialism, a testament to a deeply impactful life.

SR ARDETH PLATTE PRESENTI!



RIP Sr. Ardeth O.P. (Photo: May 1998 Gods of Metal Plowshares, Left to Right: Kathy Boylan, Sr. Carol Gilbert O.P., Fr. Larry Morlan, Sr. Ardeth Platte O.P., and Frank Cordaro)

The Miracle On Indiana Avenue

by Frank Cordaro

On August 10, a derecho (powerful wind storm) hit Iowa, leaving more than 100,000 people without power and causing trees to down electrical wires on three of the four Catholic Worker houses. The power converter at Berrigan was partially pulled from the house. Rachel Corrie and Phil Berrigan houses still had power.

The next day, unsure what to do, we dialed 911, and the fire department arrived. They confirmed we had a problem, but told us that they could do nothing about it until the power company turned off the power. They told us to call them again if a fire developed and remarked that putting out an electrical fire in this case would probably destroy the house. Then they left.

The next day, I called Dave Bruce, a friend of the house, to help remove some of the fallen trees without disturbing the limbs that were still leaning on the power line. He did a great job...until he didn't. The wrong limb was cut, and the power converter at Berrigan was fully pulled away from the house, yet still connected with a live power line. The power line and attachment to the house started smoking. Rachel Corrie house also immediately lost half of its power.

The Berrigan House scene was not good. The smell of smoke ran throughout the house. A vibrating noise with a low hum could be heard. When we turned on the cold water, hot steaming water came out! The electricity was running through the water and gas pipes in the basement!

That night, Ed went to sleep in Norman's second bedroom in the basement of Manning House, and I slept on the Berrigan House front porch.

The next day, we got ahold of Chris Coffin, our electrician, to come and assess the situation. He said nobody should be in the house. When he got into the basement and saw the extent of electrical damage from the un-grounded power to electrical boxes, water and gas pipes, Chris was shocked that the house hadn't exploded. He said in a later email, "How more damage was not done to that property is a miracle."

While Chris was calling the power company to explain that they had an emergency on their hands, the live power line broke off on its own from the Berrigan House

outside box, causing a lot of smoke and sparks. It was only then that we knew it was safe to go back into Berrigan House, because the power was no longer getting into the house.

We lived without power until Friday (four days) when the live wire was also removed from the Berrigan House yard. We are calling this the Miracle on Indiana Avenue and attributing it to Dorothy and Peter!



The Berrigan House power cables did not weather the storm very well...

Retreat

by Jennifer Rodrigues Santos

Dorothy Day was a well-known lover of retreat, owning a retreat house of her own. In her spirit, a friend and I took the weekend to stay at a lovely inn just thirty minutes from home. We took the weekend to reflect on our time as Catholic Workers and life in general. Community life can get hectic, so it is healing to spend some time away to reflect and recharge. Dorothy Day saw the usefulness of retreat and advocated for it. We have a lot to learn from her.

Do not be afraid to take a step back from your work. One should try to recharge every once in a while. If you keep pushing yourself ahead, you may fall back. It's better to take a short breather and then continue moving forward. As a Catholic Worker, the last thing you want is to put yourself in a position where you're overworked. A short retreat prevents this from happening, allowing you to come back to the work with newfound energy.

On my retreat, I was free from the chaos of community life and the noise of the city. I had 14 acres of multicolored trees and wildlife to keep me company, and one of my best friends and biggest heroes was with me. Admittedly, I was beginning to feel burnt out at the Worker before my retreat. I was balancing being a full-time student and a full-time Catholic Worker; my worlds colliding in opposition to each other. But with my retreat, I came back rejuvenated and ready to serve.

Additionally, before our arrival, the inn had been vacant for ten days and was fully sanitized by the owners. One of the owners gave us a quick tour, where we all wore masks and followed social distancing guidelines. So, in addition to getting some time away to recharge, we were given a weekend free from the dangers of COVID. It was only when I felt completely safe for two days that I realized just how much stress the virus puts me in daily. That, on top of preventing burnout, made the retreat a wonderful, healing experience.



Jenny reminds us to take some time for retreat!

Spiritual and Mental Health

by Ruth Hart

Living at the Des Moines Catholic Worker has been both a challenge and a blessing. I had no idea what to expect when my friend said goodbye as I started my new journey. I knew I was craving God's word, comfort, and teachings. I had an image of how my "new" would look and function.

Two years later, there are some things that have changed and some have stayed the same. I still feel the same humility and awe each time I enter Dingman House. I never know who I will find and what the need will be. I have prayed for a place like the Worker for as long as I can remember. A body of imperfect, sacred, flawed "superheroes of the faith." We scramble to find resources for those in need. We pray, cajole, and beseech our neighbors to step in and carry the load, with and for us.

I would be lying if I said I have emerged without bruises, hard feelings, and scars. These things are the price of being real in a hurting world. As a woman who lives with mental health issues, this work can drain me and leave me vulnerable and open to spiritual attack and intellectual strife.

What the Des Moines Catholic Worker will need during this upcoming holiday season are the following:

People: We need more people or groups to sign up to be a monthly meal provider. We need more volunteers to help service the meals and give out stuff. We could use help with food runs to pick up donations.

Donations: We always need food, toiletries, and snacks, as well as warm weather clothing and blankets.

We also email an updated list of things we need. If you want these updates, email frank.cordaro@gmail.com, and Frank will add you to our Des Moines Catholic Worker support list.

Finally, please consider financial donations to help us pay our bills. If we are all able to come together with these needs, each of us will carry a lighter burden in serving our guests.

As for me, I can't imagine being anywhere else than with my brothers and sisters at the Des Moines Catholic Worker!

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Prayers . . . without them, nothing happens.

VOLUNTEERS:

Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, cleanup), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance . . . without them, we burn out.

FOOD:

Fruit, Vegetables, Meat and Fish, Milk, Cheese, Salted Butter, Olive Oil, Sugar, Coffee, Creamer, Juice (sugar free), Salt, Black Pepper, Fresh Garlic, Salad dressing, Soups and Stews (both canned and fresh). Leftovers from weddings, funerals and other social gatherings . . .

MEAL PROVIDERS:

Provide a meal for 100 people once a month! Call or email for current openings: 515-214-1030, dmccatholicworker@gmail.com

HEALTH AND

HYGIENE:

Menstrual Hygiene Items, Diapers, Baby Formula, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Multivitamins, Antibiotic Ointment, Band-Aids, Lip balm

TOILETRIES:

Disposable Razors, Shaving Cream, Shampoo, Conditioner, Lotion, Deodorant, Soap, Toothpaste (Small sizes preferred for handout), Toothbrushes and Toilet Paper.

NEEDED CLOTHING:

Underwear, Socks, T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodies, Coats, Work Pants. (All Sizes, Especially Big) Sleeping Bags, Blankets

HOUSEHOLD

SUPPLIES:

Bleach, Laundry Detergent, Environmentally-Friendly Dish Soap, Murphy's Oil Soap, Pinesol, Trash Bags, Brooms, Rugs, Candles, Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs, Aluminum Foil, Plastic Wrap, Sandwich and Freezer Bags, Bath Towels, Playing Cards, Candles, Phone Chargers

HOUSE REPAIRS:

With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourself-ers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.

LIBRARY:

Peace and Justice books for the Berrigan House Library

\$CASH MONEY\$:

Cash donations are essential to pay our property taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance of property, upkeep and gas for two vans, purchase of needed supplies, our community gardening and for the continued publication and mailing of the *via pacis*, a good twenty percent of our annual expenses.

DMCW WEBSITE

Our website has recently been redone! Please visit us at www.desmoinescatholicworker.com. You can also visit www.viapacis.wordpress.com for an online version of the *via pacis*.



Norman Wants YOU to Support the Des Moines Catholic Worker!

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